

A Greeting to Wykeham Graduates in Reunion

**Willoughby Newton
June 7, 2008**

I send to you all the most cheerful and my sincerest greetings. At 83 and in reasonably good health and excellent spirits, I am nevertheless "frail", and that has kept me at home in my apartment on Third Avenue in New York and has denied me your company on this most pleasant occasion.

I remember happily when we were young together at Wykeham – an half of my lifetime ago. As I remember them, our days together were not, alas, all halcyon, but for me there were many, many happy and memorable times. I learned a lot at Wykeham, and I pray you can say the same. It was not only from the books with which we evolved, but also from the relationships with which we became blessed.

I suppose in the years since we were together in Washington you have learned, as I have, that life is not all fun and games, but I have also learned that if one counts one's blessings, there is sufficient fun to balance one's sorrows. Indeed, as I have aged, I have become enthusiastically aware of how essential it is to count and be grateful for the good things that life brings.

From my years at Wykeham I find there are many lovely blessings to count. That fact is underscored by the visits from time to time with many of you. In coming to see me you bless me anew and give me much present joy for which to be thankful.

One of the greatest blessings I cherish from my Wykeham years is my friendship with Sid Ferguson. Sid, with no competition, was the most marvelous and most competent

woman with whom I ever worked – and I have worked with many women before and since Wykeham – and she became one of the dearest and most caring friends I ever had.

I got to know Sid when we worked together at Kent School for Girls. She developed a great affection for my mother, who was living with me then, and she came every day to our apartment to have lunch with her. I got to know and admire Sid extravagantly.

When Otis Charles and I first began to work on starting Wykeham, I knew that as a single man with modest talents I could not be a worthy headmaster without having a strong and effective woman working at my side. I persuaded Sid to join Otis and me in what came to be a most exciting venture. Sid became so committed to the idea that she left the security of Kent and raised her own salary to support her until the school opened.

When Wykeham did open, Sid took all the jobs that I could not do or didn't want to do, which left me free to do what I could do best, such as it was. Our friendship ripened over the 13 years we worked together, without ever having a fight, and, Thank God, continued after we both left Wykeham. Indeed, for me it intensified in the years before her death when I most regretfully realized what I was about to lose.

I hope many of you will remember Sid and feel as blessed as I do in having had her friendship. She was truly the kind of woman that I hope many of you have become: together, strong and yet gentle, incisive and efficient, naturally elegant, and blessed with an infectious sense of humor. I loved to hear Sid laugh.

And so I conclude this greeting by saying: "God bless Sid and God bless each of you!"

